

Letter of Appeal
For
"Request for Waiver"
CERTIFIED OUT-OF-WINDOW FRNs
Saint Francis Xavier Catholic School
BEN - 81151

Paula Fabre Principal
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To whom,

It has been a struggle to keep Saint Francis Xavier Catholic School open in the past two years. We have gone through some trying times and obstacles due to lack of funding and enrollment. With the future being uncertain we had fallen behind in meeting our requirements for Erate funding deadlines. When it was announced the school would be open we were out-of-window. We ask that you show leniency toward us by waving the deadline our OUT-OF-WINDOW FRNs. The Universal Schools and Libraries Erate program is a vital component to Saint Francis Xavier School. To bring technology to this small predominately African American catholic school through this program has proven to be worth the effort.

Also due to these troubled times we have gone through some educational staff changes as well as the addition of our new principal Paula Fabre. She is working with the technology coordinator to make efficient use of funding to promote academic excellence. Included in this document are some of the media coverage's we have received as a result of our situation.

FRN

NAME

STATUS

875739	WEBHOST1213	OUT-OF-WINDOW
875740	COX1213	OUT-OF-WINDOW
875741		OUT-OF-WINDOW
875742	CELL1213	OUT-OF-WINDOW
875743		OUT-OF-WINDOW

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Supporters seek to save Catholic school

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Liz Condo / 00026185A

Alvin Decuir Sr., a former student and principal of St. Francis Xavier Catholic School, left, talks about recent fundraising efforts on behalf of the school with Elvin Sterling Jr., Lester Pourciau and Natalie Jones. School supporters are trying to raise money for scholarships and tuition assistance for students in hopes of saving the small Catholic school, which primarily serves African-American children.

CHARLES LUSSIER

Advocate staff writer

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Supporters of a small Catholic elementary school created 91 years ago to serve African-American children have been raising money and trying to generate support to keep the school open.

The group is working to save St. Francis Xavier Catholic School, and have scheduled a series of fundraisers throughout July on behalf of the south Baton Rouge school.

Fundraising alone, however, won't solve the school's financial predicament.

"The thing we need right now is students. We need student enrollment," said Alvin Decuir, a graduate, a former principal and the chairman of the still-being-organized Friends of St. Francis Xavier.

To help get new families in the door, supporters say they have landed a \$25,000 grant that will pay partial tuition for new students, which is in addition to a smaller, pre-existing tuition assistance program the school has long offered.

"If people are interested, they have to jump on it immediately," said Lester Pourciau, a St. Francis graduate and school supporter.

In February, the Rev. Michael Thompson, the pastor of St. Francis Xavier Church, held a "town hall" meeting to let the church and school community know he was thinking of closing the school.

Three years ago, St. Francis Xavier, on 12th Street, had 200 students enrolled. That number dropped to 120 students in February and about a quarter of them were not paying the \$3,600 annual tuition. In most of those cases, the students were getting the tuition paid by outside sources.

The school needs to have between 300 to 350 students enrolled to have a viable future, the pastor said.

"We can't continue operating the way we are," Thompson said in February.

The group of supporters quickly got together to fight the potential closure. They point to the school's rich history, many prominent graduates and say it remains a good school.

Natalie Jones has a daughter, entering the seventh grade who transferred to St. Francis a year ago. She said the girl is thriving because of the combination of small classes, personal attention and high standards.

“They push her,” said Jones. “That’s one of the things I love about this school. They don’t settle.”

At a second town hall meeting in March, Thompson relented, saying St. Francis will stay open another year — provided it attracts at least 150 students.

Sister Joseph Charles, the principal of St. Francis, said she’s operating under the assumption that the school will stay open — even though there are not 150 students enrolled.

“Father indicated we need to have 150 kids at least, but I believe we can have 125,” Charles said. “We did (have 125) last year and we paid the bills. We won’t have any slush funds because of that. We won’t have any fluff.”

Charles said only about 30 children have registered for the fall , but that will change.

“That is typical for us,” Charles said. “Our kids tend not to register until the end of July and the beginning of August.”

“Registration right now is not an important issue to the parents. Right now it is putting children in summer camps,” Charles said.

While acknowledging that some families have transferred their children elsewhere because of the possible closure of the school, supporters hold out hope that their fundraising and recruiting efforts will not only replace those students, but also attract more children, setting the school on a sustainable course for years to come.

Thompson, however, isn’t so sure.

Thompson said Friday he plans to sit down with Charles after July 15, which is the last official day of fall registration, and examine both the number of students enrolled versus how many students are likely to register late — at the end of July and beginning of August.

If the projection is too low, St. Francis may have to close, he said.

“You have to face the reality that if it doesn’t succeed, that we don’t have the money to keep the school open,” the pastor said.

Thompson said he’d rather not close the school, and urged families considering St. Francis to register soon.

Sister Charles, however, is confident that the school will stay open this year.

“The issue is whether we continue beyond this year,” she said.

In the meantime, Friends of St. Francis Xavier are working to raise money. Their next event is a jambalaya dinner set for July 16 at Bet-R grocery store.

The group is also focusing on the future. The new support organization, which will apply for nonprofit tax status, is planning to raise money from interested businesses and philanthropies.

For more information about the efforts of school supporters, call (225) 387–6639.

Daily Digest

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<http://theadvocate.com/newsletters/dailydigestnewsletter/2248155-49/black-catholic-school-to-hold.html>

Black Catholic school to hold registration fair

March 06, 2012

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St. Francis Xavier Catholic School, the only remaining predominately black school in the Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge, is holding a registration fair Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Cortana Mall.

Visitors and potential students will have the opportunity to meet with school staff and teachers to learn more about the school's curriculum and student activities, according to a news release.

The school enrolls students in kindergarten thru 8th grade.

The school has been in operation for more than 90 years.

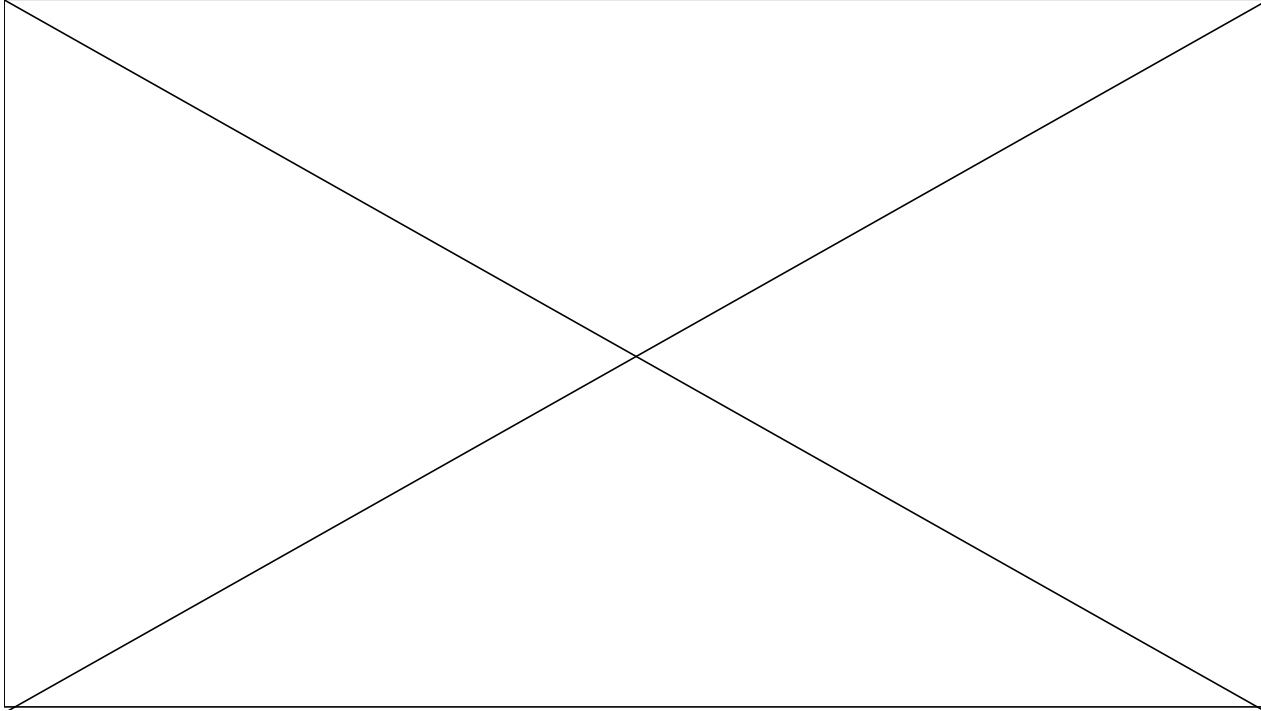
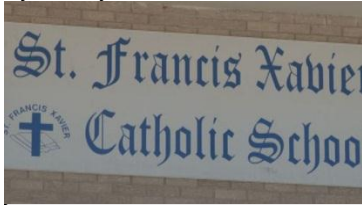
The fair will take place in the pavilion outside the JC Penney store.

For more information about the school, located at 1150 S. 12th St., call (225) 387-6639.

Baton Rouge Catholic school says voucher program could save them

Posted: Jun 01, 2012 6:10 PM CDT Updated: Jun 06, 2012 4:23 AM CDT

By Kelsey Davis - [email](#)



BATON ROUGE, LA (WAFB) -

A struggling Baton Rouge Catholic school says the controversial school vouchers approved in this session may save the school.

Vouchers were part of Gov. Bobby Jindal's 2012 education reform package. Parents with children in failing schools can apply for a voucher to send their child to a private or parochial school. And several private and parochial schools in our area are not accepting the vouchers, but St. Francis Xavier says "bring them on."

"It'll help St. Francis Xavier by increasing our enrollment and assisting us financially. So I think it's a win-win situation for both the incoming students as well as the students who are here now," said Father Edward Chiffriller, pastor of St. Francis Xavier Church.

Father Chiffriller says the school has already applied to take 95 scholarship students for the 2012-2013 school year. There are 5,100 scholarships available. The State Department of Education says since the application was posted online last week, their offices have been getting up to 500 phone calls each day. The application is open through June 29th.

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